



Written by [Kelly Holt](#) on January 17, 2011

Swiss Govt Angered Over Illegal Surveillance by U.S. Embassy

On Jan. 16, the news syndicate Breitbart reported that the U.S. embassy in Geneva has been conducting illegal surveillance on Swiss territory. In 2006 and 2007 U.S. missions in Geneva and Bern had requested protection of their buildings through surveillance programs, but the requests were denied.



Last fall, after U.S. embassies in Denmark and Norway were found to be conducting similar efforts, Swiss authorities discovered that the embassy in Geneva was also using surveillance programs, in violation of the government's decision.

The Swiss Justice Ministry explained that the U.S. requests were rejected "due to a lack of legal basis and bilateral accords on this domain," adding that authorities are "now proceeding with an in-depth examination of the situation in Geneva." The Swiss government is seeking the immediate suspension of the U.S. surveillance program.

After discovery of the surveillance programs at the U.S. embassies in Norway and Denmark, Washington admitted knowledge of the surveillance, but insisted it was only for protection and carried out within the laws of the host countries.

However, in addition to the reports from Norway and Denmark, today's [dailypress.com](#) notes that illegal U.S. spying had also occurred in Iceland and Sweden:

U.S. diplomats were monitoring some of [Iceland's and Sweden's] citizens — including allegedly taking pictures of street demonstrations and of people deemed security risks, sparking a wave of anti-American sentiment.

According to dailypress, the Norwegian newspaper *Aftenposten* reported that WikiLeaks had obtained a U.S. diplomatic cable citing an October 2005 incident involving outside surveillance from the U.S. embassy in Geneva. The embassy had checked out a Middle Eastern couple who lingered about 100 meters from the mission's entrance after a U.S. technician noticed a sign in their car with the word "Islam" in French.

Switzerland's Green Party lawmaker Josef Lang told the Zurich daily *Tages-Anzeiger*, "If the suspicion turns out to be true, then the Federal Council has to send a signal. It should expel the U.S. agents from the country and summon the ambassador."

Spokesman for the U.S. mission, David Kennedy, told the *dailypress* he could not comment on security issues.

The head of the Swiss Parliament's Foreign Affairs Committee, Christa Markwalder of the Free Democratic Party, has called on the government of Switzerland to launch criminal proceedings over the



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U.S. surveillance.

Photo: View of Geneva, Switzerland



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